

REDUCE

your
summer
electric

BILL

OUCC
Consumer
Tips



in just
6 steps →

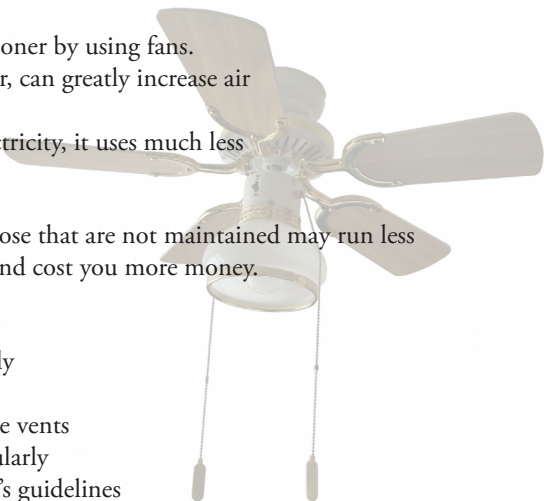


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For most consumers, electric bills increase in the summer because of higher air conditioner use. While you can save money and help the environment year-round by using energy more wisely, doing so in the summer can make an even bigger difference on your electric bills.

1 Use your air conditioner wisely and maintain it properly

- Set the thermostat at the highest comfortable temperature and dress appropriately.
- When leaving your home for a few hours or going to bed at night, raise the thermostat a few degrees.
 - Programmable thermostats that do this automatically can be purchased for as little as \$30.
- Keep lamps, TVs and other heat-generating appliances away from the thermostat. Minimize their use on especially hot days.
- Complement your air conditioner by using fans.
 - Ceiling fans, in particular, can greatly increase air circulation and comfort.
 - While a fan does use electricity, it uses much less than an air conditioner.
- Older air conditioners and those that are not maintained may run less efficiently, waste more energy and cost you more money.
- For proper maintenance:
 - Change the filter regularly
 - Keep vents clean
 - Avoid blocking the intake vents
 - Dust the thermostat regularly
 - Follow the manufacturer's guidelines
 - Make sure ducts are properly sealed



2 Use compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs

- CFL bulbs use as little as 1/4 the amount of electricity used by traditional incandescent bulbs, but create the same amount of light.
- CFL bulbs create very little heat compared to incandescent bulbs, reducing the amount of work required of your air conditioner.
- Although CFL bulbs are slightly more expensive, they save money in the long run because of their low electricity use and extra long life.

3 Proper insulation is critical

- Make sure the attic, all exterior walls and floors are properly insulated, along with basements or crawl spaces (if you have them).
 - Make sure your insulation carries the proper rating for the region you live in.
 - For houses in Indiana, the U.S. Department of Energy recommends ratings between R-38 and R-49 in ceilings and between R-18 and R-22 in walls.
 - More information is available at hardware stores and from the Department of Energy's Insulation Fact Sheet (www.ornl.gov/roofs+walls/insulation).
- When using a window air conditioner, eliminate air leaks between the air conditioner and window with foam insulation or weather stripping.
- Check weather stripping, caulking and seals around doors and windows. Even a small crack or hole can lead to the same air loss as an open window.
- Indiana homeowners who add new insulation, weather stripping, storm doors/windows or double-pane windows may qualify for an insulation deduction (of up to \$1000) on their state income taxes. For more information, see Page 19 of the Indiana IT-40 Income Tax Booklet, available from the Indiana Department of Revenue (www.in.gov/dor).
- A federal income tax credit is available for home energy efficiency improvements made in 2006 and 2007. To learn more, visit www.energy.gov/taxbreaks.htm.

4 Participate in your electric utility's voluntary direct load control program, if available

- These programs offer bill credits in exchange for allowing the utility to install a switch on your air conditioner or electric water heater. The utility can turn off or "cycle" the appliances for brief periods during peak demand times.
- The cycling results in little or no discomfort or inconvenience, but helps the utility ensure reliable service and reduce pollution. It also helps keep rates down by delaying the need to build new power plants or buy additional power.
- Duke Energy Indiana, IPL, Vectren and a number of REMCs currently offer direct load control programs. See the OUCC fact sheet on Direct Load Control programs for more information.

important note:

Some utilities offer free home energy analyses and energy efficiency kits that can help consumers reduce bills even more. In addition, some utilities offer financial assistance for low-income consumers.

Income-eligible consumers can also receive winter heating and limited summer cooling assistance from the state's Energy Assistance Program. For more information, call 1-800-382-9895.

Landscape properly to increase energy efficiency

- Air conditioners work more efficiently when shaded by trees or shrubs. However, make sure trees and shrubs do not block the airflow.
- By planting deciduous trees on the west and south sides of your yard, you can shade your home from sunlight during the hottest parts of the day. Because these trees lose their leaves in the fall, winter sunlight will reach the building, helping to keep it warm.
- Rocks and cement hold and radiate heat.

Take simple steps throughout the home or business

- Close storm windows and doors to keep cool air in.
- Close blinds, shades and draperies facing the sun to keep heat out.
- White blinds, shades and curtains reflect sunlight (dark colors absorb it).
- Consider reflective films for windows that face south.
- On very hot days, minimize the use of ovens, stoves, washers, dryers and other appliances that generate heat.
- On days when the temperature reaches 90 degrees or more, it is best to wait until after 6:00 pm before cooking, doing laundry or washing dishes.
- Microwave ovens, pressure cookers and outdoor grills use less energy than regular stoves and ovens.
- Reduce the thermostat on your water heater.
- Turn off all unnecessary lights.
- Turn off computers, monitors and other home electronics (including TVs, VCRs and stereos) when you are not using them.
- Use a timer if you are planning to be away from home and want to have lights turned on for security reasons.
- Look for energy efficient appliances when shopping. Products with the Energy Star label (www.energystar.gov) operate well above minimum energy efficiency standards.

